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THE WAR RELIEF WORK OF THE COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

INTRODUCTORY

BY THE EDITOR

The Council of National Defense was created by Act of Congress on August 29, 1916, to create "relations which render possible in time of need, the immediate concentration and the utilization of the resources of the nation."

Since the declaration of war on April 6, 1917, the Council of National Defense has concentrated its efforts on the mobilization of industries, resources and people of the United States for the effective conduct of the war. It has, accordingly, concerned itself with war relief only incidentally to this primary task, and the following articles on war relief work are, therefore, descriptive of but one or two of the many important branches of the work of the Council of National Defense. In order to understand this relief work of the Council of National Defense, it is necessary first to consider briefly the far-reaching organization established by the Council of National Defense in the several states and smaller localities.

The Council of National Defense consists of the Secretaries of War, Navy, Agriculture, Interior, Commerce, and Labor, assisted by an Advisory Commission of seven experts. The executive work of the council is performed through its committees and those of its Advisory Commission together with certain supplemental sections and divisions.

Immediately after the declaration of war by the United States, the Council of National Defense extended its organization into the states in two ways: first, by appealing to the governors of each state to create state councils of defense similar in function to the Council of National Defense; and, second, by appointing a Woman's Committee to direct and organize the war work of women. In response to the first appeal, state councils of defense or bodies have been created by the proclamation of the governor or by Act of Legislature in every state in the Union. Where committees on public safety already existed, these were designated by the governor

to act as state councils of defense. At the same time, the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense extended its organization into the states, by the creation of state divisions. As the development of the state councils of defense and state divisions of the Woman's Committee has been slightly different, these two organizations will be considered separately.

The state councils of defense are the official war emergency organizations of the states, entrusted in general with the execution of all the work of the state relating to the war, outside of the regular functions of the state executive departments. The state councils of defense are also the official state organizations for centralizing and correlating all war activities within the state, and for coördinating the work and supervising solicitation of funds of voluntary societies engaged in war relief work. These forty-eight state councils of defense, in addition to their state functions, are also the official representatives of the Council of National Defense in each state carrying on in its behalf, and in the behalf of the federal departments and war administrations, certain important war activities entrusted to them by the Council of National Defense or by some federal department or administration. They have also become central state bureaus of war work, whose extensive and effective organization is largely used by the state agencies of those federal administrations which have deemed it necessary to create direct state agencies, responsible for the exercise of their power and the conduct of their work in the several states. In spite of this national position, however, these state councils of defense are essentially state bodies, tracing their principal authority to state law.

Experience rapidly proved that the great tasks before the state councils of defense, whether of state or national origin, were tasks the ultimate accomplishment of which could not be brought about by the action of their organization itself, but only through enlisting and directing the efforts of the people at large. To meet this need, the state councils of defense have uniformly created county or similar local councils of defense to represent the state and national councils of defense in the localities. At the request of the Council of National Defense, the state councils are now engaging, and in many states have completed, the creation of community councils of defense in the school district or a similar local unit of such small size that all the citizens in that locality can be reached through

personal contact. These community councils of defense are not mere committees, but organizations including within their membership and activities all the individuals of the community, and all the war agencies conducting work in the community. They are, in effect, the community itself organized for war work.

To head up this far-reaching organization of state, county and community councils of defense, the Council of National Defense created a special section, called the "State Councils Section." This section transmits to the state councils of defense, to be rebulletinized to their local councils, the requests for assistance of the Council of National Defense and of the various federal departments and war administrations. It also assists in the development and extension of the organization and work of the several state councils of defense, and acts as a representative of these state councils in Washington.

The growth of the state divisions created by the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense, has been largely similar. The state division is the official war emergency organization of women operating in the state, which is recognized by the federal government. The organization has been extended to counties, cities and towns, and in many states to wards, precincts and even city blocks,—and this machinery has been used to bring the war measures of the Government to the attention of the women of the country, and to secure their coöperation as far as possible.

In order to enlist the most intelligent and effective service on the part of women, the Woman's Committee has created certain well-defined departments of work, and secured in the states the coöperation of government agents and other experts in these particular lines. At the same time it has established in Washington a connection with the executive departments and federal agencies concerned with war activities as they relate to women, so that by these means the Woman's Committee conveys to the women of the country authoritative information and instructions, and at the same time directs them toward the most efficient means of putting both information and instruction into effect.

In the terminal organization, in the small communities, the state divisions of the Woman's Committee and the state councils of defense are united in creating the community council of defense above described as the common local organization of both. The

position and functions of the local organizations of the Woman's Committee are similar, in their application to women, to those of the state councils of defense. In most states, the state divisions of the Woman's Committee and the state councils of defense are effectively drawn together, through the fact that the state and county units of the Woman's Committee operate as the Woman's Committee of the respective state and county councils of defense. Thus the Council of National Defense, through its state and local councils of defense and state and local units of its Woman's Committee, has established an organization reaching with the message of the war the individual citizens of this nation and enlisting and directing their efforts in effective and necessary war work.

The following articles, concerning the work of these bodies and their local agencies in its relation to war relief, are written by persons closely in touch with the work of the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense and of the State Councils Section. These articles, descriptive of a part of the work accomplished by these agencies in the states, are not, however, in any way, official statements of the Council of National Defense.

DEPARTMENT OF HOME AND FOREIGN RELIEF OF THE WOMAN'S COMMITTEE

BY ELISABETH CAREY,

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The Woman's Committee was organized at a time when the attention of the country was turning with renewed intensity to the alleviation of the sufferings caused by the war. Women everywhere were flocking in steadily increasing numbers to the surgical dressings room. Every day saw new efforts to supply the wants of war refugees. Knitting was fast becoming the occupation of every spare moment. It was obvious, then, that any organization which had for its avowed purpose the encouragement and coördination of women's endeavor, must include in its program some provision for relief work. Accordingly, the Department of Home and Foreign Relief was created.

In realizing the powerful appeal of such work and the oppor-